



The “Quiet Crisis” of Kansas Health Care

Earlier this month, in the State of the State message, I concluded that Kansans face a quiet crisis in health care delivery, services, and costs. How, you might ask, can a crisis be “quiet?”

To be sure, we do not have the Supreme Court ordering us to reform our health care system, as it has done with public schools. Nor do we face the dramatic devastation of floods, tornadoes, or drought.

When a part-time worker loses her health insurance, there is no hue and cry. When an elderly Kansan can’t afford to fill a prescription, newspapers don’t run headlines. Nevertheless, health care costs do continue to spiral upward, and a quarter-of-a-million uninsured Kansans find themselves in financial peril every day of their lives. That’s a crisis, even if it’s not well recognized.

Over the past 18 years, as a legislator, as insurance commissioner, and now as Governor, I have fought for better health care, stronger insurance, and lower medical costs for all Kansans. In a bipartisan alliance with Insurance Commissioner Sandy Praeger, we have organized a single division that consolidates the state’s purchasing power to obtain the best possible health-care pricing for the many Kansans who rely on the health insurance we provide.

We must also reduce the costs of administering health care. Nationally, these costs have increased by more than a third since 2000. In Kansas, administrative expenses account for more than 30 cents of every Kansas health care dollar. The Kansas Health Care Cost Containment Commission, consisting of expert members from the worlds of medicine and business, will find ways to reduce administrative costs. In the end, more Kansans will receive affordable, high-quality care.

Last November, Kansas joined the I-SaveRx program, in which states drive down costs by allowing their citizens to buy safe, low-cost prescription drugs from state-approved pharmacies in Europe and Canada.

No single program can address all the problems of providing first-rate health care to all our citizens. But the initiatives before us, along with my absolute commitment to fight any Medicaid cuts from Washington, will allow us to protect more children, to offer more coverage for working families and small business employees, and to reduce the costs of prescription drugs – in short, to foster a healthier Kansas.